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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the need for a mentoring program for school principals in developing countries where, as in South Africa, no formal structures for principal mentorships exist. Following an overview of mentoring and a review of literature, characteristics of a successful mentoring system and effective techniques for observation and feedback are described. Some essential elements include mutual responsibility, trust, long-term goals, and clear objectives. Mentors should demonstrate outstanding expertise and knowledge, enthusiasm, flexibility, and practical experience. Proteges develop self-confidence, learn to apply theory to practice, and clarify their own interpersonal styles. Mentors experience professional growth, teamwork, the development of a more stable organizational culture, and greater personal reflection. Some obstacles include time constraints, the individual-oriented climate of most educational systems, and interpersonal problems. In conclusion, a mentoring system is an essential tool for preparing principals, particularly the newly appointed principal. Contains 28 references. (LMI)

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THE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF SCHOOL PRINCIPALS BY MEANS OF A MENTORING SYSTEM IN A DEVELOPING COUNTRY

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THE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF SCHOOL PRINCIPALS BY MEANS OF A MENTORING SYSTEM IN A DEVELOPING COUNTRY

1. Introduction

In boun the literature and in practice, the professional development of school principals has long been neglected.

Research in England by Weindling & Earley (1987), as well as research in the USA by Daresh (1987), acknowledges the fact that the beginner principal should be supported in the isolated environment in which he/she performs his/her task. It appears that the newly appointed principal experiences particular problems regarding his/her role clarification, management skills and his/her ability to adapt to the social environment of the new school. These aspects are not addressed in traditional training programmes for school principals. Alternative methods will have to be found to support and to empower the newly appointed school principal, in particular, for the challenges of the new appointment.

Even though school principals are trained teachers, many of them are not trained for their management task which lies ahead. Hallinger and McCary (1990) state in this regard that training programmes for school principals in the USA do not attain the expected aims. In the Republic of South Africa, the question also arises whether training programmes in educational management still meet the requirements of the changing challenges of the principalship. It is generally excepted that the school principal does have a management task. What is currently of importance, is how he/she is being trained for this task.

The in-service training and professional development of school principals are common practice internationally (vide England and the USA). In some states of the USA the successful completion of an internship is compulsory for appointment as a principal (Daresh & Playko, 1990). Recent research points to the fact that school principals express a strong need for more professional development opportunities such as formal mentoring programmes (Daresh, 1988a:7; Daresh, 1988b). There is also a need for improvement in existing training programmes for school principals (Murphy & Hallinger, 1987:247).

Various programmes for the in-service training and professional development of school principals exist in England and the USA, as well as in other countries. The mentor plays an integral part in most of these programmes. When recent research is taken into account, it seems that development programmes in which experienced colleagues play the part of mentors to less experienced principals, play the most important role in the professional development of both the mentor and the less experienced colleague (McHale, 1987:848; Daresh, 1988a:1; Healy & Welchert, 1990:17). In the RSA school principals are not obliged to improve their qualifications in educational management. Some departments of education do present short orientation courses for newly appointed principals. Further training in the field of educational management is undertaken of their own free will, but structures for the implementing of formal mentorships for school principals do not exist.

The question that arises from the above, is how to enable newly appointed school principals to develop professionally by means of a mentoring system. In the following paper, the focus will fall on the need for the professional development of school principals by means of a mentoring programme in a developing country.

2. Definitions of terms

* Professional development

Professional development may be described as all those activities which focus on the personal growth and development of an individual, which enable him/her to comprehend the nature of the new post and to comply with the requirements of that post. Professional development is therefore directed at the ongoing provision of support activities and feedback mechanisms to enable an individual to reflect to another on the way in which the task is being performed.

- **Mentor**

A mentor may be described as an experienced and knowledgeable adult (school principal) who accepts the responsibility and who expresses a desire to share his/her acquired knowledge and skills with a less experienced adult (newly appointed principal) by supporting and guiding him/her and also by acting as a role model during the initial stages of the principalship.

- **Protégé**

A protégé may be described as a less experienced adult (newly appointed principal) who accepts the responsibility for his/her own professional development by depending on a mentor (experienced principal) to help him/her to acquire the necessary skills, as well as to define an individual professional conviction in order to handle the post effectively.

- **Mentoring/mentoring system**

Many authors define mentoring as a dynamic, reflective work relationship between an experienced official (mentor) and a newly appointed employee in an organisation (protégé), in the sense that the work relationship is guided by the professional development of both the participants (Daresh, 1988b:4; Levine, 1989:240; Moerdyk & Louw, 1989:24; Healy & Welchert, 1990:17; Playko, 1990:29); Barnett, 1990a:2; Stott & Walker, 1992:154).

For the purpose of this paper, mentoring or a mentoring system may be described as that phenomenon which takes place during the induction phase of the protégé (newly appointed principal), where a mentor (experienced principal) and the protégé commit themselves within a work relationship to enhance the professional development of both persons.

- **Mentoring programme**

A mentoring programme stipulates how a mentoring system functions within a specific institution and normally has a starting phase and a conclusion phase (Gibble & Lawrence, 1987; Tennessee State Board of Education, 1988; Barnett, 1990a; Scott & McGinley, 1991; Blair & Koehn, 1991; Cote, 1991; Mattox, 1991; Mauriel, 1991).

A mentoring programme therefore implies a specific, structured, formal professional development activity where a mentoring system is utilised and which can be traced to a certain institution or organisation.

3. The need for and aim of a mentoring system for school principals

The question now being asked is how to prepare school principals in a developing country for the demands with which they will be confronted in the 21st century. In the literature, the implementation of a mentoring system is presented as the obvious answer to this question (see NASSP, 1985; Watts, 1986; Moses & Hakel, 1986; Daresh, 1987; Barnett, 1988; Daresh, 1988c; Barnett & Mueller, 1989; Daresh & Playko, 1990c; Hallinger & Greenblatt, 1990; Daresh & Playko, 1992b).

The task of the school principal has changed drastically over the past century. Initially, the school principal in a smaller school was responsible for the teaching-learning activity, and he was primarily concerned with the instruction of pupils. As schools expanded and more teachers joined the staff, the principal's task gained an ever greater management dimension.

The application of a mentoring system should also be seen in the light of the growing needs of, particularly, the beginner school principal. Among other things, he needs to be placed on the right path in his new post so that he can eventually carry out his task as a school principal independently and with confidence, as well as reach set objectives in the various phases of his career.

Since the isolation within which the school principal has to execute his task at best merely allows for the maintenance of skills and, at worst, causes the manifestation of poor managerial behaviour, mentoring systems are applied to make the further professional development of school principals possible. Mentoring systems provide principals with ongoing feedback - feedback which is not always possible in the absence of a mentoring system (Gibble & Lawrence, 1987 : 72-73; Cohn & Sweeney, 1992 : 2).

The success or failure of a school is determined by the success or failure of the school principal. Precisely because of this, very genuine input on the part of every role-player within education - and, more specifically, the beginner school principal - is essential to ensure success within the school.

Mentorship provides an essential additional strategy for training and developing school principals, particularly when a principal is newly appointed in his post. The reason for this lies in the developmental needs of beginner school principals during the first few years of their principalships. The successful transition from the classroom to the principalship therefore makes mentorship a necessity.

An important aim of a mentoring system is, according to Daresh (1988d : 1), the custom of implementing it together with other development programmes in order to enable new school principals to deal with the management demands of their posts, in collaboration with experienced school principals. In this regard, Hamilton and Hamilton (1992 : 549) claim that the most functional aim of a mentoring system should be the promotion of self-confidence in the protégé.

Daresh and Playko (1992b : 102-105) regard the following aspects as important aims of a mentoring system as an induction programme for beginner school principals:

* **Remediation:** specialised aspects in respect of the specific appointment
* **Orientation:** orientation in respect of the new post
* **Socialisation:** learning his place and role within the school as a social environment and integration in the school climate

Based on the above views, the observation may be made that the professional development of the beginner school principal can be effected by the development of his knowledge, skills and personal vision about his management task. This can occur by means of methods that are not found in traditional training programmes.

The conclusion may be drawn that the aim of mentorship is to accompany the protégé/beginner school principal in such a way that he is able to achieve his full potential as a school principal throughout all the various phases of his career. The immediate aim of a mentoring system is therefore 'on-board assistance' for the beginner school principal, but the ultimate aim is to help school principals in their continuous professional development as their careers progress.

4. The characteristics of a mentoring system

In the implementation of management development programmes in the private sector, much emphasis is placed on the mutual support and guidance by experienced managers for beginners, in order to provide these beginners with opportunities to develop. As a result, formal mentoring systems have been introduced in many of the major financial institutions in the USA (Daresh & Playko, 1990b; Hunt, 1991a : 11).

For some time now, mentoring systems have also been applied to prepare beginner teachers more effectively for their teaching task. These mentoring systems for beginner teachers are so highly regarded that 16 states in the USA have made the application of mentoring systems legally compulsory for the first year in which a teacher occupies a post (Daresh & Playko, 1990b : 1).

The question may therefore be asked how are school principals to be prepared for education leadership in the future: what ought future school principals to know and how are they to acquire this knowledge?

Based on the custom at many school principals' centres to offer mentoring programmes (see Risan, 1987), it may also be claimed that mentoring programmes need not only be used for the preparation and selection of aspiring school principals, but that they can also fulfil an important function in the professional development of, especially, beginner school principals.

Mentorship should be attuned to improving the qualitative skills of the beginner school principal in respect of his management task.

Calabrese and Tucker-Ladd (1991 : 68) concur with this view and add that a mentorship ought to manifest the following characteristics if it is to be successful:

* Co-involvement
* Inclusiveness
* Directiveness
* Reciprocity of activities
* Development
* Role-modelling

A mentoring system should also manifest the continuous growth and development of adults as its central characteristic. Such mentoring systems have already existed for some time at an informal level. What is, however, happening in the USA at the moment is that formal, structured mentoring programmes are being developed on a large scale (Daresh & Playko, 1990a : 47).

Definitions of terms currently encountered in the literature point to the fact that mentoring relationships develop and change as they grow and develop through the various career phases of the participants. Barnett (1990a : 3) consolidates all the different phases that are characteristic of a mentoring relationship, as follows (also see Healy & Welchert, 1990 : 20):

* The initial period of establishing the relationship
* Intense interaction between the mentor and the protégé
* The termination of the mentoring relationship, after which new roles are identified and each of the two people may fulfil the role of mentor

One of the main characteristics of a mentoring system lies in the possible application of mentoring systems throughout the various career phases of the participants, for example, during pre-service training, during induction, and during the ongoing in-service training, as and when developmental needs change (Daresh & Playko, 1988 : 9). Research by Hall (1976), Schein (1976), Gould (1978), Levinson (1978) and Kram (1985), as quoted by Daresh (1988d : 5), points out that, in each phase of their careers, individuals are confronted with predictable needs that are peculiar to their specific ages and career histories.

Playko (1990 : 30) is of the opinion that, in the creation of a work relationship involving trust, both parties will experience highs and lows. This is when it is essential for both parties to bind themselves to the maintenance and expansion of their relationship so that both will derive benefits from it.

In essence, the nature of mentorship differs from that of the traditional role model which is, in many cases, prevalent among school principals. Daresh and Playko (1992b : 113) use the research done by Shapiro, Haeltine and Rowe (1978) to point out that the different relationships which are traditionally upheld as mentors can actually be placed on a continuum, with the 'peer pal' at the one extreme and a true mentoring relationship at the other. In between, yet other developmental relationships are found such as those of guide, sponsor and patron (also see Schein, 1978 : 178).

In the light of the above discussion it may be accepted that, apart from the specific career phase within which the mentoring system is functioning, the relationship between the two parties must be of a two-way, interactive nature in a risk-free environment, in which both the mentor and the protégé must feel free and must encourage each other to share their inner problems and feelings concerning their professional roles.

For this reason, a characteristic that is peculiar to mentorship is the fact that it consists of combinations of different teaching-learning activities as executed by a teacher, trainer, role model, patron or successful leader. The mentor must accept responsibility for the teaching-learning activity within the mentoring relationship. At the same time the true mentor must also be capable of recognising and developing the protégé's talents and skills and must create opportunities for professional development.

5. The functioning of a mentoring system

Since mentoring systems have already been applied in the induction of beginner teachers for some time, they can also be applied fruitfully in the induction of beginner school principals. A mentoring system for teachers cannot, however, simply be taken over and applied to school principals, since the two roles differ completely. Mentoring systems must, therefore, be adapted to suit the particular needs of school principals.

A mentoring system for school principals is mainly applied in two possible ways. A mentoring system can be applied as a pre-service training opportunity for aspiring school principals, or during the process of the professional induction of newly appointed school principals. Since the emphasis in this paper falls on the mentoring system for the beginner school principal, the latter application of the mentoring system will be the point of departure of this discussion. The point of departure in the functioning of a mentoring system must at all times be based on the principle of practice-oriented learning experiences.

The rationale behind the functioning of a mentoring system for beginner school principals lies in the fact that the State of Ohio (USA) legally requires beginner school principals to work under the guidance of experienced school principals for a certain period of time in order to prepare them for the transition from the classroom to the post of school principal (Daresh & Playko, 1990a : 49). In the RSA, however, there is no fixed policy in this regard.

One should guard against pre-compiled curricula that are linked to a time schedule. An example of this is to decide in advance that the mentor will show the beginner school principal how to compile a budget in March; in June how to do class visits, etc. As many contact sessions as possible between the mentor and the beginner school principal are essential to the success of the mentorship. During these contact sessions, attention should be given not only to the acquisition of technical management skills by the beginner school principal, but also to the personal and professional needs of the protégé. In particular, the professional formation of the beginner school principal should be addressed.

5.1 Responsibilities of the mentor

From recent research it appears that the following aspects are regarded as key responsibilities of the mentor (Daresh, 1988d; Daresh & Playko, 1989a; Daresh & Playko, 1989b; Blair & Koehn, 1991):

* **Advising:** The mentor ought to respond to the needs of the protégé concerning the acquisition of new insights, skills and information so that the latter can execute his management work effectively. This implies that the mentor must be available to react to questions and problems which the protégé may be experiencing.

* **Communicating:** The mentor must ensure that the communication channels between himself and the protégé are always open.

* **Consulting:** The mentor must give the protégé emotional support throughout.

* **Guiding:** The mentor must work at orienting the protégé and at introducing him to the norms and values of the specific school community.

* **Providing a role model:** The mentor must also serve as a true role model for the protégé by consistently demonstrating his expertise and professionalism within the work situation.

* **Protecting:** If necessary, the mentor must serve as a buffer between the beginner school principal and other people in the school who could have an adverse influence on the latter's achievements regarding his work.

* **Developing skills:** Throughout, the mentor must be attuned to supporting the beginner school principal in the acquisition of the required skills for the post. For Cohn and Sweeney (1992 : 7), the mentor's main responsibility lies in the fact that he must accompany the protégé on the basis of his own acquired skills which he has already applied successfully in practice.

From the above it appears that the responsibility of the mentor within a mentoring system may be classified in terms of the two roles which he plays. He fulfils his primary role by giving the beginner school principal guidance and support within the mentoring relationship. At the same time he also fulfils a secondary role by orienting the beginner school principal, by means of induction, for his new task, and by initiating a network of relationships with other colleagues, into which the beginner school principal can integrate.

There is a very strong possibility of a mentoring system failing if the right partners are not placed together. This is why it is essential to devote attention to the identification of mentors and protégés.

5.2 Identification of mentors and protégés

The identification of two people who will adapt within a mentoring relationship is by no means an easy task. The ideal is to place each beginner school principal with a mentor who is truly concerned about the professional development of inexperienced colleagues and who really wishes to establish a mentoring relationship with a colleague. It could also be a sensible practice to allow a protégé to choose his own mentor.

Owing to various factors, such an ideal placing of participants is not always possible. Small or remote schools or school regions make this type of placement of mentors and protégés impossible. For example, it would be inadvisable to place a high school principal as the mentor of the beginner school principal of a junior school. Another factor that hampers ideal placing is the fact that the management task of a school principal at a large school differs considerably that that of his colleague at a smaller school. For this reason the principal of a large school cannot act as a true mentor and role model for the principal of a smaller school, and vice versa.

According to Daresh and Playko (1992b : 122), the ideal composition of a mentoring relationship should be based on an analysis of professional objectives, interpersonal management styles and the learning needs of both parties. Since the above ideal is difficult to achieve, Daresh and Playko (1989b : 29) are of the opinion that, provided individual awareness of values, mutual trust and respect, a sense of openness and positive interaction are present in a potential mentoring relationship, the chances of the relationship being successful are very strong.

Once suited mentors and protégés have been identified, they are placed within a developmental relationship where they analyse one another's management behaviour and actions. In order to be able to do this, certain techniques exist that can be applied to ensure effective mentoring.

5.3 Techniques for the observation of management behaviour and feedback mechanisms

In the functioning of a mentoring system it is standard practice for both the participants to observe one another's management behaviour and actions and to discuss these observations with one another. Two of the techniques that are applied for this purpose are known as 'shadowing' and the 'reflective interview'.

During shadowing, the events that are taking place are noted in their sequence and every ten minutes the time at which an event occurs is recorded. During the reflective interview questions that have been prepared by the interviewer in advance are posed in order to gain clarity on the specific behavioural manifestations. In this regard, it is important to focus only on the actual events that were observed, and to ask questions that

are formulated in neutral phrases without being judgemental. Time must also be set aside for a discussion on the information obtained from the interview (see Barnett, 1990b).

Events and activities that are suitable for observation are, among others, the following:

* Staff meetings
* Interviews with parents
* Class visits
* Evaluation of teachers
* Management body meetings

If roles are swapped, it is advisable to observe the same actions by the other person, which means that the actions of both can be compared. A receptive and relaxed atmosphere should always characterise these discussions. This will contribute to the degree of trust between the two participants and will allow both to ask and to answer in-depth questions during the discussions.

6. The requirements of a mentoring system for school principals

6.1 Requirements which a mentoring system must meet

Daresh (1988d : 2) distinguishes between the following as important requirements for a successful mentoring system:

* Beginner school principals must accept responsibility for their own professional development.
* Fraternal behaviour and mutual trust is of vital importance for the success of a mentoring system.
* Individual plans of action and objectives must be determined for the sake of professional development.
* A wide range of alternative instructional activities must be made available in order to provide in the learning needs that are peculiar to adults.

Further to the above, Barnett (1990b : 24) is of the opinion that academic institutions should be actively involved by rendering assistance on a continuous basis and by developing learning opportunities within the mentoring relationship.

Healy and Welchert (1990 : 18) concur, and they also distinguish between the following requirements with which a mentoring system should comply:

* Dynamic interaction
* Spontaneous mentoring activities between the parties
* Long-term aims
* A deep, receptive relationship between the parties

The mutual trust between mentors and protégés is the critical element in the success of a mentoring relationship. For mentoring programmes to succeed, it is also necessary to plan these programmes around specific objectives, for example, to help the protégé to deal with the social demands of his new appointment.

Mertz et al. (1989 : 10-11) and Barnett (1990a : 4-5) are of the opinion that sex plays an important part in the success of mentoring relationships, since research indicates that ladies experience feelings of overprotection, stress and social distancing in the presence of male mentors. It is also important for the age difference between mentor and protégé to be no more than eight years. If the difference is greater, the protégé experiences too much dependence on the mentor.

The voluntary participation of both mentors and protégés is an important requirement for successful mentorship, since forced mentoring relationships can give rise to unnatural work relationships that impede meaningful growth and development (Barnett, 1990a : 5).

Green et al. (1991 : 14) draws an important distinction between a mentoring system and the principle of training. Training is more directed at regular interactions between parties - these are determined hierarchically, and accountability is called for on the basis of the protégé's observed management behaviour and actions. To truly achieve success in a mentorship, attention should not only be devoted to feedback on the observed management behaviour of the protégé. Activities within the mentoring relationship must therefore also be directed at the joint setting of aims based on the developmental areas of the protégé, and not only at the practical management challenges with which the protégé is confronted in the school.

6.2 Requirements with which a mentor must comply

In research it was found that not all experienced school principals make good mentors, even though Calabrese and Bartz (1990 : 4) regard experience as an important characteristic of mentors (also see Green et al., 1991 : 14). Daresh and Playko (1990a : 50) are of the opinion that a person's ability to act as a mentor has nothing to do with his success or effectiveness as a school principal, but that he should have a number of personal characteristics that will make him an ideal mentor. In this regard, Levine (1989 : 241) says that it is precisely the complex skills which mentors have to possess that makes it difficult to find suitable mentors.

Cohn and Sweeney (1992 : 4) are of the opinion that mentors ought to be trained in order to function effectively in their role. They use the research done by Gillespie (1989) and Alleman (1989) to show that mentors who have received training in their task function better than mentors who have received no training.

Of the most important requirements with which a mentor must comply, is the fact they he must have certain personal characteristics. As mentioned above, skill and expertise are not necessarily characteristics of a good mentor. An important indication of a potentially successful mentor is his willingness to function in the role of mentor, as well as his desire to help colleagues in their professional development.

From the literature it therefore appears that a mentor should have, among other things, the following characteristics (Schein, 1978 : 178; Daresh & Playko, 1988 : 10; Daresh & Playko, 1989a : 18; Daresh & Playko, 1990c : 74-77; Daresh & Playko, 1992c : 149):

* **Outstanding knowledge, skills and expertise in a specific sphere**

This characteristic is necessary to enable the mentor to provide meaningful advice from the perspective of his own frame of reference. It is, however, not necessary for a person to have many years of experience as a school principal in order to be a good mentor. Some of the best mentors in the Danforth programme had no more than two years of experience as school principals (Daresh & Playko, 1989b).

The mentor need not be a school principal at the time of his mentoring, though he must have been a school principal for a period of time in the past. This will enable him to help the beginner school principal to clarify his work expectations and to bridge the shock of the reality

It is equally important for the mentor to be chosen not only from available, experienced school principals, but also from people who have functioned effectively in the role of school principal. Beginner school principals must learn their skills from the best role models. Playko (1990 : 29) supports this point of view by pointing out that the protégé needs to learn from a mentor who not only knows what to do, but how to do it correctly. The mentor must, therefore, demonstrate his management expertise.

* **Enthusiasm**

Mentors must manifest enthusiasm for, on the one hand, their task as mentors and, on the other hand, the management task of the school principal. This enthusiasm must have an infectious effect on the protégé.

* **Mentors must have the ability not only to provide the right answers, but also to generate the right questions**

Although the mentor will obviously have to answer the protégé's questions on certain aspects of his task as school principal, the mentor's biggest task is to stimulate independence in the protégé.

* **Mentors must accept that there are alternative ways to act**

Mentors must refrain from being prescriptive towards protégés by not insisting that there is only one correct way to handle a matter. This implies that the beginner school principal must be given the opportunity to work out his own modus operandi for his own situation. This characteristic of the mentor is the dividing line between ordinary training and true mentorship. In this regard, Playko (1990 : 30) says that the mentor must create a climate within which the protégé can discover and understand new things and himself take decisions, without the mentor creating a scenario where the protégé feels that he is being protected from failure.

* **Mentors must manifest a desire to see people achieving to a higher level than themselves**

At first glance, this characteristic of a mentor seems to be easy to comply with. If, however, the protégé develops to such an extent that he achieves better than his mentor did, we are dealing with a horse of a different colour. A meaningful mentoring system requires the mentor to accept that other people can do certain things better than he can, and the effective mentor will not only have to accept this aspect, but will even have to encourage it.

* **Mentors should promote the principles of continuous reflection and purposeful learning opportunities**

It should be kept in mind that the task of the mentor involves, on the one hand, that he must help the beginner school principal to acquire certain management skills and, on the other hand, to cultivate certain values and attitudes.

* **Mentors must have practical experience of how matters in a particular school environment ought to be dealt with**

The acquisition of the 'correct' manner of doing things within the school organisation is one of the critical skills which a school principal must possess in order to achieve personal and organisational objectives. In this regard, the mentor can provide information that is not available in official documents. The mentor must, therefore, take into consideration how matters are dealt with in the specific school, since this may differ from other schools owing to factors such as school climate, socio-economic influences, political views of the community, etc.

Further characteristics that are set as requirements for mentors include, among other things, the following (Papalewis et al., 1991; Blair & Koehn, 1991; Pienaar, 1992b; Department of Correctional Services, 1992 : 31-33):

* The ability to communicate clearly what one's personal attitudes, values and ethical standards are
* The ability to provide, with sensitivity, the protégé with the necessary feedback in respect of the latter's professional development and the expected standard of behaviour
* The ability to be a sensitive and active listener towards the protégé
* Confidence in the potential of the protégé
* Flexibility in one's personality and a sense of humour
* The ability to refrain from prescriptive guidance so that the protégé can develop independently
* Experience as a school principal and must be regarded as effective by colleagues
* Specific leadership characteristics, including the following:
  - Intelligence
  - Good communication skills
  - Acceptance of multiple methods of problem-solving techniques
  - Clear vision and the ability to share that vision with others

- Interpersonal skills and sensitivity to the needs of others
* Knowledge about the protégé's post in order to be able to provide meaningful accompaniment
* The ability to approach tasks systematically in order to communicate particular techniques to the protégé
* Social acceptability for the protégé

From the above it can be seen that certain personal characteristics can be set as requirements with which the mentor must comply. It is, however, important to note certain aspects and situations which will determine whether or not people will be suitable to act as mentors.

Such aspects include, among other things, the following (Daresh & Playko, 1992b : 119):

* People who pursue positions of power within the relevant school where they are to act as mentors, will not be good mentors.
* Mentors who are themselves occupying new posts such as those of superintendent or lecturer, will not be good mentors, since they themselves have to learn many new aspects and do not, therefore, have sufficient time to devote to mentorship.
* It would also be inadvisable to oblige a mentor to work with a weak school principal in order to force the latter to adapt to existing practices (the so-called do-or-die approach).
* School principals who have a reputation for large-scale staff turnover at their schools due to work dissatisfaction, will not be good mentors.
* A person who appears to be omniscient will not be successful as a mentor, since this can have an adverse effect on the open work relationship which must exist between the two parties.

To fulfil all his roles as a mentor, it is essential that the mentor manifests a willingness to take this important task upon himself.

Daresh and Playko (1989b : 29) distinguish the following characteristics which the protégé must have, as preconditional for successful mentoring activities:

* Enthusiasm for his work, as well as enthusiasm for his personal involvement in the study of the work sphere.
* The ability to show initiative and a conscientious involvement in the development of his own potential
* A genuine commitment to the execution of envisaged plans and activities in order to rise above the level of the required minimum standard in his achievements
* An open and objective attitude, with no feelings of being threatened
* A greater degree of insight in himself and others
* A sense of humour

In the light of the above, it may be accepted that the protégé (beginner school principal) must be receptive to all learning opportunities that may occur in the school situation. The mentor is not the only person from whom the beginner school principal can learn. His colleagues and other people at the school, the parents and the community provide abundant learning experiences for him to draw from.

Secondly, the protégé must feel free to consult the mentor if it proves necessary to seek advice on certain aspects. Mentors are not in a position to anticipate where the beginner school principal will experience problems.

Thirdly, the protégé must be receptive to suggestions made by the mentor. If he assumes a superior attitude, the mentor will soon lose interest in the mentoring relationship.

7. The value of a mentoring system

7.1 The value of a mentoring system for the protégé

According to Levine (1989 : 242), a mentoring system enables beginner school principals to experience management practice and to analyse - which is not possible in traditional training programmes.

Cohn and Sweeney (1992 : 3) refer to research by Levinson (1977), Collins (1983), Kouba (1984) and Adam (1986) which indicates that people who have experienced mentorship achieve greater success in their managerial work than those who have not (also see Kring, 1992).

For Smith (1990 : 51) the value of a mentoring system for the protégé lies in

* the purposeful initiation of a planned and organised development programme which is directed at the specific developmental needs of the individual;
* the possibility of accelerated learning processes;
* the possibility of appropriate work experiences and promotion possibilities;
* recognition of individual achievements which, in turn, makes provision for work dissatisfaction and other motivational aspects;
* the immediate availability of support in respect of work-related matters;
* the possibility of socialisation within the work situation by following the example of the mentor's behaviour and values, and
* the possibility of a holistic and yet individualised approach to professional development.

Daresh and Playko (1990a : 52) found that a mentoring programme has a positive influence on the professional growth of the protégé. Obvious development and growth occur as a result of the regular interaction between the protégé and the mentor. A substantial discrepany between the initial management skills of the protégé and his eventual achievements after the mentorship has run its course, is one of the main findings of the abovementioned research. Protégés who participate in a mentorship manifest a more purposeful approach in their management tasks, a more serious approach to finer detail, and a greater awareness of what their educational leadership entails.

A mentoring system contributes to the acquisition of self-confidence and the cultivation of management expertise in beginner school principals (Barnett, 1990a : 5). Beginner school principals experience feelings of uncertainty and incompetency when they first take up their new posts. It is the mentor's task to facilitate the transition from one post (that of teacher) to the other (that of school principal) for the protégé (Playko, 1990 : 31).

The protégé is also given the opportunity to apply his theoretical knowledge in practice. The mentoring relationship places the protégé in a position to apply in practice the knowledge he has acquired during his academic and pre-service training. Even communication skills are improved by means of the mentorship (Barnett, 1990a : 5). In this regard, Playko (1990 : 31) says that the way in which a person communicates (either in writing or verbally) says much about the person. Within the mentoring relationship, the protégé can be accompanied, by means of communication skills, to project a positive image and other developmental needs can also be addressed.

One of the main advantages of the mentorship for the beginner school principal is the fact that he learns the so-called 'tricks of the trade' (Playko, 1990 : 31). The acquisition of these technical management skills occurs on the basis of proven techniques and strategies which mentors have already experienced in practice.

The implication of the above is that the beginner school principal is placed in a position where he can personify and individualise the management skills and techniques he has observed in the mentor, in his own work situation. In this way the beginner school principal's personal developmental needs are provided for and he can consolidate his own management style within his work situation.

In this regard, Barnett (1990b : 22) is convinced that the beginner school principal obtains insight into the real management task of the school principal. According to Daresh and Playko (1990b : 10), the fact that the protégé is associated with a person (mentor) who understands the nature and essence of the specific work situation, is of immeasurable value to the protégé.

In the light of the above, it is important to point out that the mentor must also serve as a true role model for the beginner school principal, since the latter will want to model his management behaviour and actions on a person who is familiar with the real situation in which the beginner school principal finds himself.

In addition, a mentoring system forms an anchor for the professional formation dimension during the induction phase. In this regard, Daresh (1988d : 16) points out the value of mentorship in respect of the following elements, each of which will make a contribution in the future management practice of the school principal:

* **Personal reflection**

The beginner school principal does not only learn new skills; he also personifies what he has learned from his experience, for application in his future management practice.

* **Professional conviction**

The beginner school principal has an opportunity to form his personal educational philosophy, professional convictions and values, and to share them with other colleagues.

* **Interpersonal style**

Beginner school principals develop an understanding of the different management and leadership styles of other people and how these different styles can be integrated to suit their own situations.

* **Personal professional development**

The beginner school principal explains, within the mentoring relationship, what his future career objectives are. He also identifies strengths and weaknesses, and indicates how these weaknesses can be bridged and how his strengths can be expanded.

The value of a mentoring system is only truly realised when the protégé moves from under the mentor's 'wings' and is accepted and respected as an equal colleague. Healy and Welchert (1990 : 19) refer to this process of the beginner school principal's becoming independent as the qualitative development phase.

Further to the above, Kring (1992 : 118) points out that, through the intervention of his mentor, the protégé is given the opportunity to progress more rapidly in his career.

To support the fact that a mentoring system has a very definite value for the professional development of the beginner school principal, the prominent ways in which adults learn will now be discussed (Prideaux & Ford, 1988 : 19):

* Opportunities for concentrating on actual task-related aspects of management
* Opportunities for taking risks
* The application of actual experiences in the work situation
* Opportunities for reflecting learning experiences to others
* Learning together with colleagues and being supported by them
* The observation of colleagues' management behaviour and actions and learning from their experience
* Personal selection of the aspects to be learned, and how to do the work

In view of the above, the value of a mentoring system for the protégé can be recognised in the fact that the protégé, by virtue of the mentorship, is offered all the abovementioned learning experiences.

7.2 The value of a mentoring system for the mentor

Daresh and Playko (1992a : 17) are of the opinion that mentors derive as much, if not more, work satisfaction from their involvement in mentoring systems as the protégés (also see Stott & Walker, 1992 :

155). To serve as a source of help for other people offers ample opportunity for personal reflection in respect of personal convictions and values, and in respect of personal, professional developmental needs. In this way, the mentor's skills are also improved (McCullough, 1987 : 58). Mentors experience their involvement in mentoring activities as a challenging and highly stimulating activity, particularly when the mentor has reached a stage in his career where new challenges and the initial excitement of principalship have diminished.

Another advantage of a mentoring system for the mentor lies in the opportunities offered by the mentorship for the personal career progress of the mentor (Daresh & Playko, 1992b : 121). Through his interaction with the protégé, the mentor is influenced positively by the protégé's energy and enthusiasm in the sense that new ideas and techniques are recognised, i.e. he can also learn from the protégé (Mertz et al., 1989 : 5; Healy & Welchert, 1990 : 19).

For Smith (1990 : 51), Pruett (1990), as well as Daresh and Playko (1992d : 19-20), the value of a mentoring system for the mentor lies in the fact that

* it makes the personal growth of the mentor possible;
* teamwork, shared values and improved communication are promoted;
* work satisfaction is promoted;
* increased motivation occurs;
* the recognition of colleagues is enjoyed;
* leadership skills are developed, and
* a stable organisational culture is promoted.

Since the isolation within which the school principal has to execute his task is one of the biggest obstacles in the successful functioning of his management task, mentors have the opportunity (by means of a mentoring system) not only to liaise with protégés, but also with other mentors. On the one hand, this liaison enables the mentor to work together with other colleagues and, on the other hand, it helps him to keep abreast of the latest management practices and research findings.

8. The disadvantages of a mentoring system

By means of research, Daresh and Playko (1992a : 15) found that the full potential of the mentoring system as a means for the professional development of school principals has not yet been truly achieved.

When reasons for the above findings are sought, one must pay special attention to the phenomenon of the majority of mentoring systems focussing on the support of beginner school principals in specific spheres where they experience a real need, or of attention being devoted only to the acquisition of technical management skills.

A further obstacle in the functioning of a mentoring system lies in the fact that growth and development will not occur if the protégé becomes too dependent on the mentor.

Daresh and Playko (1992b : 112) are of the opinion that the root of this overdependence lies in the phenomenon that the protégé leans too heavily on the mentor as the provider of all the answers to all the possible questions.

In the light of the above, it may be claimed that the beginner school principal can become so overdependent on the mentor that opportunities for him to derive real benefits from his own experience are lost. In Daresh and Playko's opinion (1988 : 9), in the planning of a mentoring system, thorough consideration should be given to the actual essence and aim of true mentorship.

Lemberger (1992 : 30) refers to the climate prevailing in schools and to the inherent characteristics of the teaching staff as further obstacles in the functioning of a mentoring system. The psychosis currently prevailing in schools, i.e. that each person does his own thing, solves his own problems and does not seek

help from others, will first have to be eliminated before a mentoring system can really come into its own as a professional developmental practice.

Although Irvine (1985 : 129) found that mentoring systems are extremely time-intensive and that this can sometimes be a major impediment in the successful implementation of mentoring systems, the mentors in his sample nevertheless indicated that the advantages of a mentoring system outweigh its disadvantages (also see Smith, 1990 : 52).

Research by, inter alia, Mertz et al. (1989 : 13-14), Barnett (1990b : 23), Lemberger (1992), and Daresh and Playko (1992b : 119-120) also identified the following obstacles which can impede the successful functioning of a mentoring system:

* The mentors can become overprotective of their protégés and also prescriptive in their roles.
* Mentors can pursue hidden personal agendas at the cost of the protégé.
* A beginner school principal can only acquire a limited perspective of his management task from one single mentor.
* Mentors are unable to recognise and accept the limitations of their protégés.
* Mentors can be excessively idealised by their protégés.
* Beginner school principals can try too hard to be precise replicas of their mentors.
* Formal mentoring systems may seem too structured.
* Mentors can set unattainable standards for their protégés.
* Some mentors find the status that is associated with the position uncomfortable.
* For some mentors, the hierarchical relationship between themselves and their protégés is unnatural.
* Many mentors tend to keep the process of their mentorship confidential and do not share their findings and results with others.
* Many mentors experience problems when observing their protégés in the sense that they want to give too much direction and support instead of simply observing the protégé's behaviour.

In the light of the above obstacles, it is clear that most of them are merely technical problems. If mentors are effectively trained for their task and, in due course, gain more experience within the mentorship, most of these obstacles can be eliminated.

9. Résumé and conclusions

At present it is accepted that the school principal does have a management task. What is, however, of importance, is how the school principal is prepared for this management task in order to comply with the requirements with which a school principalship will confront him, especially in the future.

From the foregoing chapter, the conclusion may be arrived at that a mentoring system is an essential instrument for preparing both present school principals and future school principals appropriately so that they may function effectively in their posts. To make this possible, there are a number of requirements with which both the mentoring system as well as the participants will have to comply.

Precisely because so much emphasis is at present being placed on alternative practice-oriented methods for preparing school principals for their management task, the mentoring system provides an essential method which will entail obvious implications for the preparation and integration of, more particularly, the beginner school principal. Because the mentoring system implies an interactive and dynamic process, it is essential that both the mentor and the protégé bind themselves to the strengthening of the mentoring relationship to the advantage of both.

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